

THE RELIGION OF WORKS.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MURIEL LESTER.

[A student of Theosophy who prefers to be anonymous visited Kingsley Hall and interviewed its presiding genius. There is Theosophical spirit in evidence there and in the words of H. P. Blavatsky (*Key to Theosophy*, p. 186) "Every Theosophist is bound to do his utmost to help on, by all means in his power, every wise and well-considered social effort which has for its object the amelioration of the condition of the poor. Such efforts should be made with a view to their ultimate social emancipation, or the development of the sense of duty in those who now so often neglect it in nearly every relation of life."—Eds.]

We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet.

W. B. YEATS.

The way lies through some of the meanest streets in London's East End and the last but one is the meanest of all. It is a narrow thoroughfare lined with costers' barrows, whereon lie the people's second-hand clothes, piled in crushed confusion, and the people's food, meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, exposed to dust, flies and a myriad other brutish influences. On the pavements littered with dirt and debris, haggard and bent or rough and gruff shoppers jostle one another. A sharp turning to the right, another,—there rises straight and true a simple tower, unornamented and austere. And the way crosses by two or three steps a stone porch into "a place of worship."

Its polished oak parquet-flooring, oak-panelled walls, the curve of which directs attention to the Eastern window with burnished copper and flowers arranged to shape in the mind's eye the form of the Holy Grail, the bareness, are unusual. The golden austerity of this hall would be strangely beautiful anywhere but here, with those streets outside so near at hand. Like the ideas that fashioned it, it is sublime, for the Religion of Works has taken actual form, emblem of twenty-six years of service on the altar of humanity.

Muriel Lester, in the early nineteen-hundreds, used to drive with her family from a beautiful country home to town to the theatre and to social entertainments. The way lay through Bow, conspicuous because the foulest odours came from there. She says she had no social conscience then but some friends were interested in a girls' club. So Bow having drawn notice, she went. She became interested in the factory girls she met. Her brother, Kingsley, her sister, Doris, and she set to work at first with a little house, then in nursery schools, begging the use of gardens from the people around.

"One started, took it on for fun," she said on the wide, concrete, verandah-like roof of the present Kingsley Hall with the bare, cell-like rooms behind and, stretched out ahead, Poplar. "Then it became a duty (I loathe the word 'duty'). Very soon it was just affection. One could not have borne *not* to do it." She looked out over the roofs of London's East End, with tightly clasped hands, as once